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YOUNG ADULTS TEN TO FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER SEVERE READING DISABILITY.

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THE PRESENT STUDY WAS DESIGNED TO OBTAIN AN OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL STATUS OF YOUNG ADULTS WHO HAD BEEN DIAGNOSED AS SEVERLY DISABLED READERS IN THEIR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL YEARS. OCCUPATIONAL POSITION, LEVEL OF EDUCATION, LEVEL OF READING SKILL, EDUCATIONAL STATUS, ATTITUDES TOWARD READING AND REMEDIAL HELP, AND MARITAL STATUS WERE ASSESSED BY TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS AND A TESTING SESSION. THE SAMPLE, 32 MALES BETWEEN THE AGES 20 AND 26, WAS STUDIED INITIALLY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL CLINIC DURING THE YEARS 1948 TO 1953. SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE WAS BASED ON SEX, AGE, CLINICAL DIAGNOSTIC CLASSIFICATION, INTELLIGENCE, AND AMOUNT OF RETARDATION IN READING. ONLY THOSE PUPILS IN A 50-MILE RADIUS, WITH NO PRIMARY EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCES OR OTHER HANDICAPPING CONDITIONS, AND WITH IQ'S IN THE AVERAGE RANGE WERE INCLUDED IN THE STUDY. TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS WERE COMPLETED WITH 23 SUBJECTS, AND THE TESTS OF CURRENT READING AND EMOTIONAL STATUS WERE GIVEN TO NINE OF THESE SUBJECTS. THREE GROUPS OF SUBJECTS WERE DESCRIBED--GROUP I, THOSE WHO COMPLETED THE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW AND WHO AGREED TO COME IN FOR TESTING, GROUP II, THOSE WHO COMPLETED THE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW BUT REFUSED TO COME IN FOR TESTING, AND GROUP III, THOSE WHO WERE UNAVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW. RESULTS OF THE STUDY ARE DISCUSSED, ADDITIONAL RESEARCH IS SUGGESTED, AND TABLES AND REFERENCES ARE GIVEN. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN "ELEMENTARY SCHOOL JOURNAL," 66, OCTOBER 1965. (SP)

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Young Adults Ten to Fifteen Years After Severe Reading Disability

Whether faith in remedial teaching is justified, is a moot issue. One crude indicator of effectiveness is the status of young adults who were once severely handicapped in reading and who consequently, while growing up, experienced the usual pattern of remedial efforts to teach them to read.

Surprisingly little research has been published to detail the result. An unpublished study of the St. Louis Public School Reading Clinics followed 555 pupils to assess their school achievement after release from the Clinics (1). In general, these individuals, who had had severe reading disability, made measurable gains while in remedial instruction: 70 per cent graduated from elementary school and 20 per cent from high school. According to the author, post-high-school education was not a realistic goal for these pupils.

In a twelve-year follow-up study, Silver and Hagin reported on the perceptual, psychological, and cognitive status of twenty-five children with severe reading disability initially studied at the Bellevue Hospital Mental Hygiene Clinic (2). As young adults, these once disabled readers were found to still have psychological signs of neurological difficulty, including specific problems in visual and tactile perception. Adults who, as children, had had difficulty on the classical neurological examination were compared with adults who had shown only psychological signs of neurological involvement; the latter group showed greater improvement in reading. In addition, those who were found to be adequate adult readers had been the least seriously disabled as children.

Directly relevant to the study reported here is the investigation by Robinson and Smith, who surveyed the status of forty-four University of Chicago Reading Clinic clients ten years after clinic contact (3). Robinson and Smith found that nearly all their subjects had subsequently completed high school; more than half, twenty-seven, had completed college (eleven more were currently enrolled in college); three had obtained a Master's degree, and, of these three, two were studying for a Doctor's degree. Only one of the forty-four subjects was neither in college nor employed at the time of fol-

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low-up. Several of the jobs reported were of a semiskilled or unskilled nature, but the vast majority were professional and minor managerial. The authors concluded that "able students who are retarded in reading can be rehabilitated educationally so as to fulfil their occupational ambitions" (3: 25).

There is good reason to suspect that the sample of reading clinic cases studied by Robinson and Smith presents an overly optimistic picture of the long-range potential for seriously disabled readers. Because median age at initial contact was fourteen years, median intelligence quotient 120, and amount of retardation in reading only one to several grades below expectancy based on mental ability, the severity of disability in the original sample is in doubt. The sample is also unique in that nearly half of the readers were enrolled in the University of Chicago Laboratory School. Initial reading level was not indicated, but in view of the age, the high mental ability, and the private-school status of the pupils, it is reasonable to assume that the majority probably were slow and inaccurate but able to function in reading at chronological grade level before their clinic contact.

The present study was designed to obtain an overview of the social and psychological status of young adults who had been diagnosed as severely disabled readers during their elementary-school years. Occupational position, level of education, level of reading skill, educational status, and attitudes toward reading and remedial help were assessed by telephone interview and a testing session.

The sample consisted of thirty-two males initially studied at the University of Minnesota Psycho-Educational Clinic during the years 1948 to 1953. Ten to fifteen years later, at the time of the follow-up, the men were twenty to twenty-six years of age. Selection of the sample was based on sex, age, clinical diagnostic classification, intelligence, and amount of retardation in reading. Only pupils in a fifty-mile radius were selected because of the problems involved in follow-up.

To avoid confounding the results, only males were selected. An age criterion was established to produce follow-up ages between twenty and twenty-six years; initial contact occurred between seven years, eight months of age and thirteen years, five months of age. No pupil who had primary emotional disturbance or other handicapping condition was included, although most of the children were judged to have slight negative emotional influences in the clinical picture. Intelligence was controlled by including only subjects who had an intelligence quotient in the average range as measured by the Stanford-Binet Scale or the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children administered by trained psychologists in the Psycho-Educational Clinic. Initial reading level was two to five years below age-grade expectation; two-thirds of the pupils were reading at or below second-grade level.

A summary of the sample appears in Table 1.

After the subjects were selected, the difficult task of follow-up was begun. The procedure for gathering current

information about the subject consisted of two phases.

The first phase was a telephone interview with the subject. The information derived from the telephone interview related to the subject's academic accomplishments and goals, occupational status and pursuits, marital status, extent of remedial-reading aid, and general attitude toward reading. An outline of the areas to be questioned served as a guide for the interview. The questions themselves were not standardized. It was felt that flexibility in format and style of questioning was neeessary to establish rapport with the subjects and to encourage spontaneous expression of information. This informal technique was especially important in gathering information on the subject's attitude toward reading and its influence in his life.

TABLE 1. *Description of Sample of Thirty-two Male Poor Readers from a Metropolitan Area at Initial Clinic Contact*

Category	Range	Median
Age (in months)	92 to 161	132
Intelligence quotient	91 to 110	100
Reading retardation (years below age expectancy)	2 to 5	4 years
Reading level	Preprimer to Grade 6	Grade 2
Socioeconomic level	Lower-middle- to upper-middle-class	

The second phase of the follow-up was direct testing of the subjects who would come to the Psycho-Educational Clinic for personality and reading tests. The Gates Reading Survey was administered to obtain measures of speed, vocabulary, and comprehension within the range of skill these young adults were expected to demonstrate. For the personality assessment, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory was administered. Because the current reading level of the subjects was not known before administration of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, a tape-recorded version was used. The tape eliminated the influence of reading ability on test results. Rogge has demonstrated that the reliability and validity of the tape-recorded Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory are adequate for such use (4). The direct-testing sessions produced observations and test information on the subject's present emotional status and level of reading.

Twenty-three subjects completed the telephone interview, and nine of these also completed the tests of current reading and emotional status. The remaining nine subjects were neither directly interviewed nor tested. Six of the nine were in distant parts of the country. The remaining three were living at home but did not wish to submit to an interview. In seven cases, however, the mother or the father provided most of the necessary information; an uncle living with the family responded in one case, and in the final case a close friend of the family was the informant.

Three groups of subjects are described. Those who agreed to come in for testing (Group I) may be presumed to represent a group of young adults qualitatively different from those who did not agree to come in for testing (Group II). Those who were not available for interview constitute a third group (Group III). Even though

these follow-up data are meant to provide only a rough description for purposes of hypothesis-building, it would not be appropriate to combine the three groups. Thus, each will be described separately.

An inspection of the initial test data for the three groups revealed no differences among them in intelligence quotient, age, reading level, or any other characteristic used in initial selection of the sample, with one exception: the subjects in Group III were all between ten and twelve years of age when they first came to the clinic. In this respect Group III was more homogeneous than the other groups. With the exception of age at initial contact, the data presented in Table 1 apply to each of the three groups.

Table 2 portrays the follow-up results for the three groups. Nearly all the subjects had had sporadic instruction in remedial reading throughout their elementary- and secondary-school years. Summer programs, private tutoring, and remedial classes in school, and adult speed-reading courses—all had been attempted, but with rare exceptions these had never been given an honest trial commensurate with the child's need. The record reads as if parents and subject expected a miraculous transformation in two months and when no cure occurred the program was dropped, only to be attempted again in a new form in another year.

In fact, over the years a minor miracle did develop. In the ten to fifteen intervening years most of these children who were initially near the end of elementary school and reading as if they were second-graders somehow learned to read at or near the average adult level. Most of them graduated from high school and more than half went on to post-high-school vocational and college education. Perhaps 20 per cent will eventually graduate from college. Less than half are in occupations of a semiskilled and unskilled nature, and none are unemployed. As very young adults, these once disabled readers have surpassed the record of their fathers in education, but not in occupation. Twenty-five per cent or more of the fathers did not graduate from high

TABLE 2. *Description of Sample at Follow-up by Groups According to Co-operation in Data-gathering*

Category	Group I (9 clients)	Group II (14 clients)	Group III (9 clients)
High-school education	9 graduates	10 graduates	8 graduates
Post-high school education	9 some additional education 3 currently in college	7 some additional education 2 currently in college	3 some additional education 1 currently in college
Current occupation	3 in college 3 skilled worker 3 unskilled worker	2 in college 3 managerial 3 skilled worker 1 unskilled worker	1 in college 1 professional 2 skilled worker 2 unskilled worker 3 armed forces
Current reading grade	speed 9.6 vocabulary 10.9 comprehension 10.2	Not tested	Not tested

school (some parents would not give information on their schooling, but only parents definitely known not to be high-school graduates are included in the 25 per cent). Of the total group of disabled readers, 17 per cent did not graduate from high school. While 25 per cent of the fathers are in semiskilled and unskilled occupations as established adults, the corresponding figure for the subjects is 44 per cent (those in the armed forces were assumed to be in unskilled jobs). As young adults, it is likely that the subjects will be shifting occupations and jobs within occupations to better themselves; but their current occupational status may be a more realistic reflection of their school difficulties than their record of graduation from high school.

Other vestiges of reading disability also revealed themselves in the social-emotional characteristics of the subjects. Most of the interviewed subjects did not like school and do not read for pleasure or interest. They felt that reading trouble had hindered them primarily in academic work and that their own efforts had been the important element in improving their reading skills. Few of them gave any credit to agencies, institutions, or teachers for assistance in overcoming their reading disability. Many appeared to have a negative and slightly defeatist attitude about life in general. Only three of the thirty-two are married. They do not appear to feel that they are "masters of their own destiny" but give one the clinical impression that they feel awash in a sea of forces fashioned by others. In general they had only vague plans and goals. Beyond the clinical impressions from interviews, eight of the nine tested with the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory showed some personality deviancy.

This ten- to fifteen-year follow-up study of thirty-two male elementary-school pupils who were severely disabled in reading suggests the following hypotheses for detailed investigation.

Males who are severely disabled in reading and who come from a middle-class metropolitan area will attain average adult reading proficiency (approximately tenth-grade level), graduate from high school, possess mild emotional disorders of a neurotic type, and find jobs over a wide range of occupational levels. But proportionately more of these men, compared with a group of average readers who made normal progress through school, will have semiskilled and unskilled jobs.

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